Never never keep kittens, Ethel. Nurse the devil when it comes to a move.

Monks Stone
Rudwell

Dec. 6th
1940

If you want to know, Ethel Smyth,
Dame, Commander of the British Empire,
why I've not written before, it is because I've
had to supply the whole of 37 Meek Sq^re
with this cottage. Oh I can't go into the
dreary details — how we went to London —
found mushrooms growing on the
Carpets, wools unwinding in the chairs,
Glass to the right left & then a ceiling
fell — No we heard vans. Three days ago
~~Draft~~ they arrived. A delicious. In the
middle of unloading back we into the
farm house where we've heard 3 vans
the farmer flew into a panic — said
we must stop: said he wouldn't allow
another. handful to be added — suddenly
remembered that his attics would
Catch fire if struck by a bomb: & we?
Cart us out into the floor, & we had to

bring back the implements here. We 'm all
black & blue with moving. And the house is
packed like an emporium. And 4 tons
of books came yesterday. And the printers
Ren & all the type come tomorrow.
The bores me so. I cant even write it.
Boredom & distraction & fights with matter
have been hagridding me this fortnight.
Send letters in the hall: & 15 yards to
eat & warm. And the womens institute
elect me Treasurer. And I have to
collect 30 Subscriptions & pay Mrs Frith
2/3 for hire of hall.

Now listen talk of something interesting
I was going to say why dont you write a
Common Reader review of music? NYPL Now
Consider that. Write your loves & hates for
Bach wagner &c out in plain English.
I have an altercon motive. I want to
investigate the influence of music on literature.
But there's not a book on music that gives
me a hint. Parry all padding. What about
Tovey? Too metaphysical. Shall in the

The rest of this letter was Not included with the others – (C.N.)

Rota 2.4.63

bring back the implements here. So I'm all black & blue with moving. And the house is packed like an emporium. And 4 tons of books came yesterday. And the printers Ben & all the type come tomorrow. This bores me so. I can't even write it. Boredom & distraction & fights with matter have been haggrading me this fortnight. Cand lectures in the hall: & 15 people to eat & warm. And the womens institute elect me Chairman. And I have to collect 30 Subscribers & hay Mrs Frith 2/3 for hire of hall.

Now listen talk of something interesting I was going to say why dont you write a Common Reader review of music? NYPL Now Consider that. Write your loves & hates for Bach wagner &c out in plain English. I have an ulterior motive. I want to investigate the influence of music on literature. But there's not a book on music that gives me a hint. Parry all padding. What about Tovey? Too metaphysical. Ethel is the

The rest of this letter was Not included with the others - (C.N.)

Rota 2.4.63

12th Jan 1941

Monks House
Rodmell
12th Jan 41

Well, well, how time passes. Do I
Ever thank you for your offer of a £10
note, which was to turn into a car, & the
Car was to take me to Wokey — ee ee —
No, my sudden financial anguish was only
due to doing the years accounts with Leonard,
Like my father, I can always conjure up bankruptcy.
But unlike my father Leonard has no money complex.
So we can rub along cutting a servant, cutting
Clothes: but otherwise not encroaching on Capital yet.
Oh yes, I can write. I mean I've a fizz of ideas.
What's dead is bottling them to order. Would we
Share the Hogarth Press 25 per cent so as to
be part of Editors & Publishers? Its my
nightmare, being in their clutches: but a
nightmare, not a sane survey.
I'm interested that you can't write
about masturbation. Nor I
understand. What puzzles me is how this

If you want to know where I set my Antony Trollope. Marcia Antonine the Turned me Lucia the Rabbit, the hand that burnt

12th Jan 1941

Monks House
Rodmell

12th Jan 41

Well, well, how time passes. Do ?
Ever thank you for your offer of a £10
note; which was to turn into a car, & the
Car was to take me to Wokey — ee ee —
No, my sudden financial anguish was only
due to doing the years accounts with Leonard,
Like my father, I can always conjure up bankruptcy.
But unlike my father Leonard has no money complex.
So we can rub along cutting a servant, cutting
Clothes: but otherwise not encroaching on Capital fat.
Oh yes, I can write: I mean I've a fizz of ideas.
What's dead is bottling them to order. Would we
stand the Hogarth Press 25 years go so as to
be just a Editors & Publishers ? Its my
nightmare, being in their clutches: but a
night mare, not a sane survey.
I'm interested that you cant write
about masturbation. Nat.
understand. What puzzles me is how this

If you want to know where I set my Autobiography. Marie Antoinette turned up since the Battle, the hand that burst

Ulricence co-habit with your ability to
talk openly magnificently, freely about— very
H B. I could sit & one or the other
But as so much of life is sexual,— or so
they say — it rather limits autobiography if
this is blacked out. It must be, I
suspect, for many generations, for women; for
it like breaking the hymen — what's the
membrane's name — a painful operation, &
I withore connected with all sorts of
subterranean instincts. I still shiver
with shame at the memory of
my half brother, standing me on a ledge,
aged about 6, & so exploring my
private parts. Why should I
have felt shame then?
But — why should I be writing these
sexual speculations now. Every
other second I take my eyes off the
page to look at the Elms outside —
browning orange against a deep
blue. Then there's the little cross

NYPL
Rota 21 th 69

1st page not included with others (C.N.)

(2) 12 Jan. 1941

a/the Church against the snow. Only the snow is going. Yesterday it was a livid purple. Lord! how prickly the sun sets! Only one red slope now is left on Caburn. But I must add the smoke contributing unto Abraham Lamart works is a ruffled pink that absolutely defies description. I'll be glad to hear.

How odd it is being a countrywoman after all these years of being Cockney! For almost the first time in my life I've not a bed in London. D'ye know what I'm doing tomorrow? Going to upto London Bridge. Then I shall walk, all along the Thames, in & out where I used to haunt, & through the Temple, up the Strand & out into Oxford Street, where I shall buy maccaroni a lunch. No. You never shared my passion for that great city. Yet it's what, in some odd corner of my dreaming mind, represents Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens. It's my only patriotism: save one vision, in Warwickshire one spring when we were

1st page not included with others (C.N.)

(2) 12 Jan. 1941

a/the church against the snow. Only the snow is
going. Yesterday it was a livid purple.
Lord! how prickly the sun sets! Only one red
slope now is left on Caburn. But I must
add the smoke convoluting outing Athelhampton
Lemuel worker is a ruffled pink that
absolutely defies description. I'll be
glad to hear.

How odd it is being a countrywoman
after all these years of being Cockney!
For almost the first time in my life I've
not a bed in London. D'ju know
what I'm doing tomorrow? Going to upto
London Bridge. Then I shall walk, all
along the Thames, in & out where I used to
haunt, to through the Temple, up the
Strand & out into Oxford Street, where I
shall buy maccaroni a lunch. No.
Ju never shared my passion for that
great city. Yet it's what, in some odd
corner of my dreaming mind, represents
Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens. It's my
only patriotism: save one vision, in
Warwickshire one spring when we were

driving back from Ireland & I saw a stallion
being led, under the may & the beeches
along a grass ride; & I thought that is
England.

NYPL

Well, dearest Ethel, how damned generous
you are, breaking, & ready to break, a golden
lump off your hoard, all to buy a visit from me.
I happen to be very humble just now. I can't
believe in being anyone. So I say with
amazement, yet Ethel wants to see me!
We shall meet one of these days. By the way,
you're coming to stay in the Spring: Jan with
address the Women's Institute (or Vita is
doing) then Jan & Nessa here. Never mind
Leonard. He is a good man: in his heart he
respects my friends. But as for my staying
with you. for some occult reason, he
owes No no No. I think it a bad thing
that we're so inseparable. But how, in
this mood of preparation, dare one
speak it? I'm working really rather hard
(for me) but what's the good of what I write, I
haven't the glimpse of an idea. You'll say, it's good
for you. So it is, I've no doubt. Certainly I moved
now I must 1. make soup. 2. make butter. Tell
me how your book is going — for
that's what I want. V.

Sussex 2.4.43

Monks Horne
Rodmell [redacted] Feb 1st
1941

I've written you ever so many beautiful letters -
Cigarette letters - you know the kind, when one's
devotion to Ethel rises like a silver
smoke, two feet two words. Where are the letters I
wrote you, about 3 on a wet windy morning.
Anyhow Margot, I don't keep a journal at my head
And I forget where we left off — you were going into
the snow in snow boots. You had seduced the
wife of the wood cutter — & then? I have a
faraway lover, to match your translator — a
doctor, a cousin, a Wellesley, who lives at
Bangalore & has — by a miracle — heard of you.
If I were in London, I'd ask you to meet.
He has a herd of Jersey cows & sends me a
pot of cream weekly Oh Miss Margot —
I can't fathom her. I get now almost
daily a letter written in bed at 3 am in the
Dawn. Why at this last lap of time
should she fabricate an entirely
imaginary passion for me, whom utterly
unconscious "You & Frances Horner" she
says this morning, "are the only women

I've ever loved." The rest of womenkind, as I can well
imagine, seeing her clothes, she hates. Yet she
assures me she never bedded with a lover. And
why assure me of anything? Is it that
at the end of life she must somehow still
collect some mirror? a I, living indeed, still
reflect what's no longer there? I picture her
lovers, male, are now grizzly old Peers, with whom
it's no use flirting. Stand your ground lighthouse
Beam over this dark spot & tell me what you see.

You were saying weren't you, you wanted to see
Osbert's sketch! I heard from him t'other day — after a
lapse of years. He sent me his aunt's diaries:
in which you occur. Did I tell you! — or
was it silver smoke? I think you
came into the Tait drawing room, smoking.
which shocked Florena Stowell, who was,
perhaps is, a prefect lady. VYPL I don't care
for Osbert's prose: the rhododendrons grow to
much a height in it. But it was an
amusing book. Also I read with
Gratitude, Mr Dugdale — what did the cake cost!
some memoirs, but very light, namely, &
composed. How well people
almost always write about themselves!

Rota 2.V.63

Did I tell you I'm reading the whole of English
Literature through? By the time I've reached
Shakespeare the bombs will be falling. So I've
arranged a very nice last scene: reading
Shakespeare, having forgotten my gas mask, I shall
faint (or away). I shall forget ... They
brought down a raider the other side of
Lewes yesterday. I was cycling in to get our
butter, but only heard a drone in the clouds.
Thank God, as you would say, my Luthers left me a
taste for reading! Instead of thinking, by May
we shall be — whatever it may be: I think, only
3 months to read Ben Jonson, Milton, Donne, — all
in vet! Today however, to make me
quicken my pace, I saw a yellow wood beckon
bright green against ruby red willows. Lord! how
I started, & then saw Corning across the
marsh. Leonard, looking like a Saxon Earl,
because his old coat was torn & the lining
flapped round his gum boots.

I did walk through London the other day —
Oh but I told you about the Temple, didn't I?
all rubble & white dust? — & how, to
put heart into me, I ate Turkey at
Buzzards? I have so seldom
gloried in food, all alone. But

There must be an end to this Novel, because I must earn 10 Guineas reading a vast fat book about Mr Neale. I'm in the 16th Century, & its a wrench to work to the 18th

I had a read like a donkey going round & round a well; pray to God, some idea will flash. I have it to native. I can no longer control my brain.

I am in touch with Enid Jones, who is coming to meet Vita; who is coming to lecture the Institute; & so shall shoot Enid a message to Maurice Baring.

NYPL

Now Ethel dear, you will kindly have very kindly write to me. You see what a long letter this is: also dull. Not a very coherent letter; but Leonard dawdling by the window; & the marsh is all Emerald Green again, & the Elms barred with long clouds, & Lake pure blue behind that funny little Extinguisher — the Church. For the last 3 weeks I've lived like a moth in a towel. Did I tell you I can now make lovely, rich, savoury Vegetable soup? Tonight we shall have macaroni au gratin & my lovers Cream. But now, in God's name, I must shew this Damned indestructible American, who's spent 20 years shadowing Mr Neale. I vowed like to ask, quite simply, do you still love me? Remember how I waved that day in Sleck 24. Do love me.

V.

Rota 2.V.63

8

8th Feb 1941

Monk Moore

Saturday,

Dearest Ethel — ever since I minded your
distemper with me: but ever since I
put it down to misery. And now
your card makes all safe & sound again:
I only scrawl this to say you're hug. which
indeed I'd like to give ya. loving you
warm heart. Leonard says,
he has not read Curry: he says he
doesn't believe in Federal Union now.
He says he's given all his views in
that in his 2/6 book. Wish for Peace.
You'd like to read it — I think it very
masterly — I'll send it.

Low! What a horror about the
insects we on Paris now! Enough to make
anyone faint, even with a woman who
loves you with every fibre of her is in fact
a damned good heart. I won't say
Yours I admit all day after you like.
And what do you mean, I ask, by your

"Jm might do a fing bit of direct work for
your living..." Cor yes, I'jer mean, not to
write articles? I agree. The Miracle is
nonsense, luv, an' have to pass it all into
6 pages - damn these Edeyon!

Off to Letchworth + Cambridge
next week to see the Pen.
Oh Lord, what an effort
moving in this weather an
these conditions. Our loric
was blown up on Wednesday
Let luck 3 hours to get
back from London
by mar'taxi but
adorn

VYPL

Roto 2.4.43

Monks Horne,
1st March, 1941

Do you know, I have written you three separate letters, & torn each of them up? This is a fact. Partly, they were d-d dull: partly something always interrupted. Ever since we came back from Cambridge — 30 hours in train journeys: £6 in hotel bills, ask for Leonard to send two hours at Letchworth — I've been in a fret. Ropes kept turning up. Oh for — there was Vita, & Enid Jones to lunch. You know, if one's only got a lady daily maid it's difficult, getting food together: & the worse had run out; & the duck was all stringy & blue sinews. However Enid was a dapper as a dab chick. A brick I think would be the proper word — something a bit gritty & granular; but hard to the foot. Of course the — an old love I barely — wanted to be alone with Vita; & there I was: & it was belting wet, the Cat had scratched a hole in the

(2)

chair cover, & a visiting dog had lifted his leg
against the table — In short there was an
atmosphere of the sordid & squalid. I gave her your
message, & she kindled, & said I was to tell you —
it was when I got to this point in the
other letter that I dropped: it broke me to
speaking message: she said Maurice is
much better & her Dutch island & the
thought that half his trouble are caused by the
Rheumatic air of Rodmell dear. Now I
have told you that: & added her love, &
admiration: but — Remember and sending you
my love, & you snubbed me.
Then you sent me that 60 book: which
I've not read, nor Leonard either. I am at
the moment trying, without the least success, to
write an article or two for a new NYPL
Common Reader. I am stuck in
Elizabethan plays. I cant move back or
forwards. I've read too much, but not
enough. That why I cant break into
politics. Do you ever get stuck,
on a fly paper, as I do, when I'm
trying to make myself Master of something?
I always trust that on the next page
I shall free my legs. I have a mystic

Rota 2.4.43

belief that if one goes on persistently
rubbing the match box flame
will spurt. But oh dear me,
it hasn't.

If you want to picture me at the
moment then you must strew the floor
with mouldy dramatists; & how
can I to picture you? Do you
feel, as I do, when my head is not on this
impossible grindstone, that this is
the worst ways of the war? I do.
I was saying to Leonard, we have no
future. He says that what gives him
hope. He says the necessity of
some catastrophe pricks him up.
What I feel is the torpeur when
nothing actually happens. But
I'm cross & irritable from the
friction of village life. But it
worth? But we swoon how I
bound myself to my book. —
brewed that very rare detachment,
than some old lady tapes at the
door. How is she to grow
potatoes or tomatoes? If that were

4

(3)

all, I wouldn't mind. But the Hands are
hours pushing her stick into the lawn,
one thing following another. My theory at
that is that we have to pay the
price of detachment by being tethered
down. We doctors widows come to
your lawn, just as you're writing—
& then what d'you do? I can't
deal with Margot. Every other day
she writes to me. I can't answer. I gather
the Crowleys about the Savoy Cadging
dinners. When they fail, she writes to me.
I'm amused that she said the very same
thing to Lady Balfour. That's what I feel—
her words are used already, & they don't
fit. Two things I have now got to do:
one, to find a flat in Brighton for Roger
Fry's mistress: the other to buy 2
tons of hay for Octavia Wilberforce's cows.
The days I've to thin you could put a
safety pin through them. You see, I'm
no good at practical affairs: I'm
forked out of my element & lie gasping
on the ground. That's why, I suppose, I
can't write to you. But if you wrote to me
I should recover the tone of your voice at least.
Do tell me, what are you doing? Pain's like.
Many: anything. Leave this
duvet. V.

NYPL

Rota 2. v. 63

(1)

Monkstown, 10th March 1941

Yes. Yes yes, I come I agree.
With you- Then open to Mr.
Cooper's book, which I've just read.
Most then I come I'm on a
politician, & to take one leap
to the desirable land. I view
would be, I think, that one goes to
Poland along the road, indeed to
make it, & before one gets there.
But lord! what a relief to have
a vision! & I'm glad yours
bearing up an audience in working:
what I really wish to say though is —
how damnable these Lebanthonis are!
Letters, no letter: then letters gain:
Shall I come down for a night?
I could now, on a Wednesday — in April —
go back early Thursday.
But I daresay you can't

manage. Anyhow yours ever to
Winnie. But when yours back
lets try to bucke this solitude.
I would bring my rations.
I'm in the clutter of trying
to contrive spring cleaning. Oh over
carpets — I spent 2 hours carpet
beating, & rid the flakes of our
bombed ceiling there, & brown the
books just dusted. I'd no notion,
having always a servant, ar the
horror of dirt —
Two potatoes at the moment seem
more pressing than autobiography
We have the drone of raiders every
night, & the village is now fire
spotting — chiefly incendiaries
away over the hill.
Do no more, for I'm off to
Lewes about heating carpets, & only
wrote this because, having done
Lucy, I thought, belatedly, to!
wave. a hand of thanks.

V.

NYPL

Rota 2.4.63